Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1–21. (Cancelled)

22. (Currently Amended) A batch processing engine comprising:

a design tool subsystem operable on a first computer and configured to generate, based on user input, first specifications for a batch application;

at least one database subsystem configured to provide access for the batch application to a database comprising data to be used by the batch application;

a specification server subsystem separate from the at least one database subsystem and configured to store the first specifications;

a processing subsystem operable on the first computer or a second computer and configured to execute the batch application based on the first specifications; and

a middleware subsystem configured to communicate the first specifications within the batch processing engine.

23. (Previously Presented) The batch processing engine of claim 22 wherein the design tool subsystem is configured to generate a template based on the first specifications and wherein the specification server subsystem is configured to store the template.

24. (Previously Presented) The batch processing engine of claim 23 further comprising another design tool subsystem configured to generate, based on the template, second specifications for the batch application.

25. (Previously Presented) The batch processing engine of claim 24 further comprising another processing subsystem configured to execute the batch application based on the second specifications.

26.   (Previously Presented) The batch processing engine of claim 22 wherein the batch application comprises a report application.

27.   (Currently Amended) The batch processing engine of claim 22 further comprising a middleware ~~an~~ input subsystem configured to perform input functions for the batch application.

28.   (Currently Amended) The batch processing engine of claim 22 further comprising a middleware ~~an~~ output subsystem configured to perform output functions for the batch application.

29.   (Cancelled)

30.   (Previously Presented) The batch processing engine of claim 22 wherein the middleware subsystem is configured to communicate the first specifications from the design tool subsystem to the specification server subsystem.

31.   (Previously Presented) The batch processing engine of claim 22 wherein the middleware subsystem is configured to communicate the first specifications from the specification server subsystem to the processing subsystem.

32.   (Currently Amended) A method of operating a batch processing engine, the method comprising:

in a design tool subsystem operable on a first computer, generating, based on user input, first specifications for a batch application;

storing the first specifications in a specification server subsystem;

in a processing subsystem operable on the first computer or a second computer, executing the batch application based on the first ~~specifications; and~~ specifications, wherein executing the batch application comprises interacting with at least one database server via a database subsystem, and wherein the at least one database is separate from the specification server subsystem; and

communicating the first specifications within the batch processing engine using a middleware subsystem.

33.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 further comprising:

in the design tool subsystem, generating a template based on the first specifications; and

storing the template in the specification server subsystem.

34.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 33 further comprising in another design tool subsystem, generating second specifications for the batch application based on the template.

35.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 34 further comprising in another processing subsystem, executing the batch application based on the second specifications.

36.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 wherein the batch application comprises a report application.

37.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 32 further comprising in an a middleware input subsystem, performing input functions for the batch application.

38.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 32 further comprising in an a middleware output subsystem, performing output functions for the batch application.

39.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 32 further comprising in a the database subsystem, providing access for the batch application to a database.

40.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 further comprising communicating the first specifications from the design tool subsystem to the specification server subsystem.

41.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32 further comprising communicating the first specifications from the specification server subsystem to the processing subsystem.

42.   (New) The system of claim 1, wherein the processing system comprises a first processing system executing on the first computer and a second processing system executing on a server computer.

43.   (New) The system of claim 42, wherein a user is provided an option to choose whether the batch application should execute on the first processing system or on the second processing system.

44.   (New) The method of claim 32, wherein the second computer is a server computer, and wherein the method further comprises:

allowing a user to select whether the batch application should execute on the first computer or on the second computer.

45.   (New) The system of claim 29, wherein the middleware output subsystem is configured to route an output data stream to one of a plurality of output devices and convert the data stream to a format suitable thereto.